



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

## **Israel and Middle East News Update**

*Tuesday, June 10*

**Please Forward News Update to Your Friends & Colleagues. [They Can Use this Link to Subscribe.](#)**

### **Headlines:**

- **Iran to present counter-proposal to US, Trump says talks to resume**
- **IAEA chief says information stolen by Iran refers to Israeli nuclear research site**
- **Israel, US agree to cease UNIFIL ops. in southern Lebanon**
- **European Hamas operative behind Gaza flotilla carrying Greta Thunberg**
- **US Ambassador Huckabee said meeting with Haredi MKs in bid to prevent coalition's fall**
- **Italy cuts ties with Israeli firm Paragon after spyware scandal**
- **Trump to sign sweeping order rescinding Syria sanctions**

### **Commentary:**

- **Yediot Ahronot: Don't Give Them Guns**
    - By MK Avigdor Liberman
  - **Yediot Ahronot: The Price of Burnout**
    - By Nadav Eyal
- 

### **Reuters**

## **Iran to present counter-proposal to US, Trump says talks to resume**

Iran said on Monday it will soon hand a counter-proposal for a nuclear deal to the United States in response to a U.S. offer that Tehran deems "unacceptable," while U.S. President Donald Trump said talks would continue. Trump made clear that the two sides remained at odds over whether the country would be allowed to continue enriching uranium on Iranian soil.

**Times of Israel**

## **IAEA chief says information stolen by Iran refers to Israeli nuclear research site**

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said Monday that the information Iran claimed it seized regarding Israel's nuclear program "seems to refer" to the country's Soreq Nuclear Research Center, the first acknowledgment outside of Tehran of the theft. The Prime Minister's Office had no immediate response to the remarks by IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, who spoke during a news conference in Vienna.

**Jerusalem Post**

## **Israel, US agree to cease UNIFIL ops. in southern Lebanon**

The United States and Israel agreed that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon must cease its operations in southern Lebanon, The Jerusalem Post confirmed Sunday, following reports. The American administration has decided not to renew UNIFIL's mandate, and Israel reportedly "did not try to convince them otherwise." The vote on the mandate in the United Nations Security Council is expected to occur within a few months.

i24 News

## European Hamas operative behind Gaza flotilla carrying Greta Thunberg

The British daily The Telegraph reveals that Zaher Birawi, a Hamas official in Europe, is a founding member of the organization that orchestrated the humanitarian mission of climate activist Greta Thunberg and French EU parliamentarian Rima Hassan to the Gaza Strip. Birawi, a 63-year-old Palestinian-British "journalist," presents himself as a "founding member" of the International Coalition of the Freedom Flotilla, organizer of the trip.

Times of Israel

## US Ambassador Huckabee said meeting with Haredi MKs in bid to prevent coalition's fall

US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee has reportedly been meeting with ultra-Orthodox coalition members, as part of efforts to prevent Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government from collapsing over stalled legislation to enshrine broad exemptions from mandatory military service for the Haredi community. Citing diplomatic and political sources, Channel 13 news reported Monday that Huckabee told senior Haredi politicians "government stability is important for addressing the Iranian issue," and that early elections would be a mistake.

Al-Monitor

## Italy cuts ties with Israeli firm Paragon after spyware scandal

Italy's intelligence agencies have canceled contracts with Israeli spyware firm Paragon Solutions, according to a Monday report, following the discovery that its surveillance tools were allegedly used to monitor activists and journalists. A report released Monday by Italy's parliamentary intelligence oversight committee, COPASIR, said that Italian intelligence first suspended and then terminated the use of Paragon's spyware. It is unclear when exactly the contract was cancelled.

## **AI-Monitor**

### **Trump to sign sweeping order rescinding Syria sanctions**

President Donald Trump is preparing an executive order that will rescind a raft of sanctions on Syria, two US officials told AI-Monitor, in line with his pledge to lift all sanctions as the country aims to recover from more than a decade of civil war. Trump is expected to sign the action in the coming days, which one official described as "the full revocation of Syria's sanctions architecture." It comes after his administration announced its first wave of sanctions relief on May 23, which included a general license allowing Americans to engage in financial transactions with Syrian government entities such as the central bank, the state-owned petroleum company and Syria's national airline.

## **Commentary:**

## **Yediot Ahronot**

### **Don't Give Them Guns**

By MK Avigdor Liberman

- On July 1, 1994, as a direct result of the Oslo Accords, the mass-murderer Yasser Arafat entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt and, along with him, numerous gangs of Palestinians from different countries began to return.

- The Yesha Council and opponents of the Oslo Accords launched a public campaign [with the slogan]: “Don’t give them guns.” What is currently happening in Gaza is a repeat of the mistakes from Oslo and the direct continuation of the preconception that led to the October 7 massacre.
- For many years, contrary to my position, Netanyahu prevented action to collapse the Hamas regime. Instead, he cultivated and built it as a focal point of power against the Palestinian Authority. That policy was made manifest on repeated occasions, including during Operation Protective Edge in 2014, when he stopped the IDF from persevering until Hamas’s collapse and, instead, reached a ceasefire agreement with them. Netanyahu even cited that proudly in one of the books he wrote.
- In 2016, when I was defense minister, I tried to explain to him that Hamas is a terrorist organization whose goal is to destroy the State of Israel. I personally submitted to him a detailed document in 2016 in which I itemized Hamas’s direct threat to Israel, providing minute details about the massacre that they were planning to commit, exactly as happened on October 7. Regrettably, Netanyahu dismissed my arguments with a wave of the hand. When the defense establishment prepared an orderly operation to take out Hamas’s top leadership, codenamed Operation Musical Chairs, and all that was needed was the press of a button, Netanyahu continued to cling to his misguided preconception and preferred containment over decisive victory.
- Netanyahu was well aware of all the risks that I presented to him, and personally commented on them in a meeting of the Knesset State Audit Committee in April 2017. I also demanded on several occasions in the course of 2018 to launch a powerful operation against Hamas. In November that year, after a serious security escalation with Hamas in Gaza, I demanded yet again to launch a large-scale operation to eradicate the Hamas regime, but Netanyahu, as usual, torpedoed that initiative and spoke for the first time about a “regulation policy,” in which millions of dollars would be delivered to the Gaza Strip every month from Qatar.
- It is important to clarify: the initiative to deliver Qatari money to the Gaza Strip was not the defense establishment’s brainchild; rather, it was done at the initiative and under the direct leadership of Netanyahu himself. That destructive preconception was executed by three people on personal instructions from Netanyahu: National Security Adviser Meir Ben Shabbat; UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov; and Qatari Envoy Mohammed al-Emadi.
- I said countless times over the years, including in my resignation speech as defense minister: cash money that goes into Gaza cannot be

monitored or tracked, and it is obvious that it will reach terrorists. That was the preconception, and it is what led us to the greatest disaster in the State of Israel's history.

- In order to “counterbalance” the Palestinian Authority back in the day, Netanyahu built a monster in the form of Hamas, which ultimately attacked the [country] that cultivated it for years. Today we are seeing that same model being replicated. The October 7 government is turning over guns to gangs in Gaza in order to build a new focal point of power against Hamas. The end is a foregone conclusion: Those clans will ultimately turn the guns they received from Israel against the citizens of Israel and IDF soldiers.
- Again, the same thing under a different guise: to “gain” something immediately at the expense of grave long-term damage to national security.
- This madness is dangerous twice over. The same drug smugglers in Gaza who received guns will quickly join forces with drug smugglers in the Negev and within a short amount of time we'll see Kalashnikovs not only in Gaza, but inside the sovereign territory of the State of Israel. The fact that such a dramatic decision was made without an in-depth security cabinet discussion proves just how much contempt Netanyahu has for his fellow ministers. That is also the reason why the security cabinet, which is supposed to be prosecuting the war, is simply incapable of making real decisions.
- That is also the reason why the IDF hasn't been able to set a clear strategy and policy. The IDF hasn't defeated Hamas in more than 600 days. The original plans, which I am personally familiar with, spoke about the full conquest of the Gaza Strip and the collapse of Hamas's regime within just 45 days.
- The conclusion is clear: The October 7 government has forsaken Israel's security, and only cares about the coalition's survival. It has forsaken the soldiers in the standing army and the reserves and has enlisted only on behalf of draft-dodgers. To lead Israel to victory and to a real change, we need to change our security doctrine, and that mandates a different leadership that sees things from a responsible vantage point, and not through the prism of survival, so that we do not repeat past mistakes.
- A state commission of inquiry will bring to the fore all of the failures that led to the massacre and will allow Israel to draw conclusions and to act differently—which is the very opposite of what is being done now.

**Yediot Ahronot**

# The Price of Burnout

By Nadav Eyal

- The IDF's game plan for Gaza is changing. Not because the objectives have changed—they remain the same—but because of the army's operational conduct. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir ordered that progress be made cautiously and slowly in order to save lives and avoid unnecessary deaths of soldiers and harm to hostages. One might also note: a slow pace allows pressure to be applied on Hamas and creates room for a potential deal without taking irreversible steps.
- This slower pace delays the extremists, such as ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir, who want to charge ahead. "At the current pace, which is very measured," a senior defense official told me, "it will take months to reach even the limited goals of the operation." By "limited," the official means reaching a point where the Strip is defined as cleared of Hamas forces, except in areas where hostages are believed to be held and the humanitarian zone in Al-Mawasi.
- Currently, there are between several hundreds of thousands and a million people in the area of Gaza City, accompanied by densely packed high-rise buildings. How will the IDF deal with the final enclaves?
- "Moving to the next stage, going beyond the current phase's goals, will require a cabinet decision," the official said. "The implication of that could be a high risk of hostages being killed." That statement makes it clear that earlier political statements suggesting a new phase and rapid assault leading to quick achievements in Gaza were misleading. Talk about the number of divisions operating in Gaza is also deceptive: the key question isn't how many divisions there are, but how well they're staffed and how many combat troops are in each one.
- "Make no mistake," a prominent officer told me. "Beyond the politics, we believe we have a path to bringing Hamas to collapse. That's how we're operating."
- However, clarified the senior security official, "While Hamas is not in good shape, it is far from being in critical condition. They've lost some of their food revenue with the operation of aid centers and food distribution. They're fighting these efforts in every way—spreading false campaigns, shooting and more. Due to the drop in revenue, they're having trouble paying salaries, and that's highly significant.
- "But we're not seeing disintegration, and certainly not panic. The organization hasn't fractured into splinter groups. Despite the elimination

of their senior commanders, they're still operating in an organized manner. They're greatly encouraged by international reactions and by every attack they carry out against us, and they continue to function in a structured way. Is a collapse possible? Yes—such things can happen very suddenly. But our assessment is that it will take time.”

- This statement, too, completely contradicts the early victory celebrations from the government when food distribution began.
- Initial findings from the investigation reveal that the IDF force that was hit by an IED in Khan Yunis entered a booby-trapped building. IDF maps had already marked the building as suspicious, and the unit took precautions and detected an object resembling a barrel. The assessment was that this was the explosive. Military officials say the barrel was placed on the first or second floor of the multi-story building; the unit followed protocol and believed it had neutralized the bomb. But Hamas had planted the actual explosives on a higher floor—or possibly in a more sophisticated manner.
- It is still unclear whether the barrel was deliberately placed on the lower floor to mislead the soldiers. The outcome was painfully tragic: Sgt. Major (res.) Chen Gross; Staff Sergeant Yoav Raver; Staff Sergeant Tom Rothstein and Sgt. First Class Uri Yehonatan Cohen were all killed in the blast.
- These details illustrate the scale of the challenge the IDF faces in the Gaza Strip. While shooting incidents and sniper attacks have decreased significantly and engagements with Hamas squads are now rare, Hamas invested massively during the last ceasefire and, in the time since it ended, has been using unexploded IDF ordnance scattered across the Strip to booby-trap roads and buildings.
- On the road on which four Givati soldiers were killed—an active supply route with relatively constant movement—there had been a warning months ago about a possible IED. That alert was investigated and dismissed, according to the IDF. After the explosion, an internal review was conducted to determine if it was the same explosive. The emerging conclusion is that it was likely a new device. According to officers, it was activated by a terrorist who emerged from a shaft, detonated the device, and then retreated underground.
- Conversations with reservists are tough. I haven't heard them express any doubt about the justness of the war. That isn't merely my own anecdotal impression, but is supported by data. A poll published by Yedioth Ahronoth eight days ago illustrated that reservists are more strongly opposed to ending the war than the general public.



- That is understandable given the investment they have already made. But the central point is a deep sense of burnout, of manpower shortage—and as a result: errors and rising tension.
- “This is Vietnam,” one officer told me. “In the sense that a routine is forming. You’re supposed to be on edge, at the limit, all the time. Everyone knows the main fear is explosives. That requires very slow, meticulous work, with full attention. But when you’ve been in this story for more than a year and a half, with occasional breaks at home—it’s easy to miss something.”
- Another officer, shaken by the last two incidents, called me right afterward and gave a monologue that everyone should read: “It’s burnout. People are worn out. Entire brigades are worn out. Go yourself to the front command posts. Sit there for half a day. See what it’s like. “How could they not be? I have a soldier in a sensitive medical condition—he’s already paid a price. I told him: go home. He said, ‘If I’m not here, who will replace me?’ He does something that saves lives. And there’s no answer.
- “We’re 600 days into the war. Everyone wants to do their best. They are [all] sacrificing. Unwilling to leave their posts. Responsibility. But how long can you go on like this?
- “People are dying not—just because of the enemy; that is the price of war. We’re all willing to pay that. But now we’re paying the price of unbearable burnout, the price of exhaustion, people are in shock. Six hundred days on and off—basically, you become an employee of the State of Israel on emergency call-up, with a few breaks. That costs us in lives. And you can’t blame someone who’s burnt out for making mistakes, for succumbing to routine and pressure, for becoming numb to clear warning signs. That’s the situation now.
- “And then I get out and hear about the Haredim. It’s insane. Everyone talks about the ‘equality [in sharing] of burden.’ Listen—I don’t need equality of burden; that’s just a slogan. I need people to replace me people with a pulse! I don’t care who they bring—just fresh people. I need it urgently, everywhere. If they had drafted more people a year and a half ago, my situation today would be different.”
- The above monologue explains the clear stance that IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir has taken on the issue of draft orders. He hasn’t taken it to burnish his public image or for political reasons; he’s taken it because the IDF desperately needs people. One standout population in terms of reserve duty participation is the national-religious community. A secular soldier from the greater Tel Aviv area region said: “It’s striking—the

**presence of the kippa-wearers. They're the ones still showing up, while everyone else has significantly scaled back. Way out of proportion. We owe them a huge debt."**